

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The undersigned respectfully submits that the application as amended is in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the Office Action dated 19 June 2002, therefore, are respectfully requested.

I. Amendments

The present amendment corrects a typographical error in the specification; amends claims 32-34, 68, 70, 75, 78, 80, 88, 94, 95, and 97; adds new claims 98 and 99; and cancels claims 69, 77, and 89. Upon entry of the present amendment, there will be a total of 37 claims, 8 of which are independent. Enclosed herewith is a check in the amount of \$264, which includes \$84 to cover excess claims fees necessitated by the present amendment (\$84 for 2 more independent claims @ \$42 ea., small entity status having been established). Any deficiencies in these fees may be charged to Deposit Account 50-0665.

II. Objections to the Specification and Drawings

The Examiner objected to the specification and drawings, citing a typographical error in the specification and stating that the drawings fail to include reference numerals 112 and 114. The present amendment corrects the typographical error in the specification. With respect to the objection to the drawings, the undersigned would like to call the Examiner's attention to Figure 1, which includes reference numerals 112 and 114 and it appears that no correction to the drawings is necessary. If the undersigned has misunderstood the Examiner's objection, the Examiner is encouraged to call the undersigned to explain the objection so amended drawings can be presented promptly.

III. Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph

The Examiner rejected claims 34, 79, 94, and 95 under the second paragraph of §112. The dependencies of claims 34, 94, and 95 have been changed to address the Examiner's concerns regarding those claims. Claim 75, from which claim 79 depends, has been amended to recite an elongate member, rendering the present rejection moot.

IV. Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102 and §103

The Examiner rejected claims 32-36, 65-68, 74-76 and 88 as anticipated by or obvious over one or more of U.S. Patents 4,936,823, 5,509,900, and 6,059,734. However, the Examiner indicated that all of the other claims which depend from these rejected claims would be allowable if presented in independent form.

Claim 32 has been amended to incorporate limitations previously present in cancelled claim 69. Amended claim 32 is not identical to prior claim 69, but the undersigned submits that amended claim 32 is patentable over the applied art. Claims 33-36, 65-68, and 70-74 depend from claim 32 and, therefore, also are patentable.

Claim 75 has been amended to incorporate limitations previously present in cancelled claim 77. Amended claim 75 is not identical to prior claim 77, but the undersigned submits that amended claim 75 is patentable over the applied art. Claims 76, 78, 79, and 82 depend from claim 75 and, therefore, also are patentable. Claim 80, which previously depended from claim 75, has been amended to incorporate limitations of claim 75. Hence, claim 80 and dependent claim 81 are also believed to be in condition for allowance. Furthermore, new independent claim 98 generally parallels prior claim 79, which the Examiner indicated was allowable if presented in independent form.

Claim 88 has been amended to incorporate limitations previously present in cancelled claim 89 and generally parallels prior claim 89. Consequently, claim 88 and claim 90, which depends from claim 88, are patentable over the applied art. New independent claim 99 generally parallels prior claim 90, which the Examiner indicated was allowable if presented in independent form.

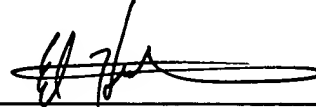
While claims 32, 75, 80, 88, 98 and 99 parallel claims the Examiner indicated were allowable if presented in independent form, they may not exactly reproduce those claims. The Examiner, therefore, is encouraged to carefully review these claims to confirm that they remain allowable. The present amendment amends claims the Examiner rejected under §102 or §103, but undersigned wants to clarify that the present amendment should not be read as admitting that the Examiner's rejection is

correct or dedicating the subject matter of those claims to the public. To the contrary, the present amendment is being submitted solely to expedite issuance of claims the Examiner has already indicated are allowable and the undersigned specifically reserves the right to pursue the subject matter of the rejected claims at a later date.

V. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, the claims pending in the application comply with the requirements of 35 U.S.C. §112 and patentably define over the applied art. A Notice of Allowance is, therefore, respectfully requested. If the Examiner has any questions or believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is encouraged to call the undersigned at (206) 264-3848.

Respectfully submitted,
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